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Columbus Launches 311 Customer Service Call Center Mayor Coleman Takes Calls From Residents

(Columbus) Starting this month, Columbus residents have a new, easier way to ask questions, report potholes, schedule bulk trash pick up, learn how to start a Block Watch program or request many other City services for their neighborhoods - it's called 311, and it replaces hundreds of City telephone numbers for information and assistance.

"This is one easy number to call with all sorts of non-emergency concerns and questions," Mayor Michael B. Coleman said Monday while touring the 311 Call Center and answering phone calls from residents. "This is where we are putting Columbus at your service and City government at your fingertips. We are committed to making government more efficient, customer-friendly and accountable, and 311 helps get the job done."

The launch of 311 is one of a number of steps Mayor Coleman has taken to improve customer service and operations since taking office in 2000. Not only will Columbus' 311 one-stop phone number make it less confusing for citizens to get services, it also will be a new management tool, expediting the delivery of City services by routing requests electronically to the City agencies that will schedule and/or perform the work. It also makes the City more accountable and efficient by tracking the progress of scheduled work or other actions to avoid delays. 311 does not replace 911. It is for non-emergency calls only.

"The move to a 311 system continues the City's ongoing effort to become more efficient and effective," said Council member Kevin Boyce, chair of Council's Administration and Finance Committees. "These types of improvements save tax dollars for more direct services. In times of tight budgets, that's a result we can all applaud."

311 representatives have been cross-trained and are expecting to handle as many as 77,000 calls a month. The 311 Call Center will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and a computerized system will allow after-hours calls to be recorded. Cell phone users and non-AT&T (formerly SBC) residential customers can access the new 311 Customer Service line at 614-645-3111. Under the 311 system, customers will also be able to make service requests on-line through www.columbus.gov or <http://311.columbus.gov/>

The City of Columbus has invested \$800,000 in mostly capital funding to create this new service, and expects it to cost approximately \$1.6 million a year to operate with a staff of 26 full-time representatives and 2 part-time representatives. Except for the 2 part-time positions, staff funding is through the consolidation of existing City positions and budgets, not new spending.

